

Ashton to Tetonia Trailway State Park

Introduction: The Ashton to Tetonia Trailway State Park is a “rails-to-trails” project laid out upon the old roadbed of a railroad that was built in 1912, to serve the communities of the Teton Valley. It was a branch line of the Oregon Short Line Railroad, a subsidiary of Union Pacific Railroad, that connected the communities of Ashton, Idaho, to Drummond, Lamont, Tetonia, Driggs, and Victor. The railroad brought prosperity to the sparsely populated Teton Valley. It had connected formerly isolated communities, and moved important agricultural freight, such as livestock, seed potatoes, peas, and grain.

The Teton Valley is an area located on the west slope of the Teton Mountain Range and is known as "The quiet side of the Tetons." It is composed of the cities of Victor, Idaho, Driggs, Idaho, Tetonia, Idaho, and Alta, Wyoming. The Teton Valley is a rural, agriculture and ranching based economy with a shifting emphasis towards recreational tourism. The Teton Valley has a unique climate and geology. Teton Valley also has a wide variety of attractions including national parks, wildlife, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, skiing and cultural arts. Some have referred to the Ashton to Tetonia Trail as “Idaho’s best kept secret.”

Getting There: Take Highway 20 north from Idaho Falls. At Sugar City, turn right on Highway 33 and proceed about 16 miles to the Town of Tetonia. Turn right on N. 3000 W. and then right again on Egbert Ave. The parking lot will be about 500 feet on your right.

About two miles before reaching Tetonia on Highway 33, there is the intersection of Highway 32. Take Highway 32 north for about 3 miles to Wells Rd. Turn right on Wells Rd. and proceed to the crossing of the Ashton to Tetonia Trail (about 100 feet), the Felt Parking lot is on the left.

Continuing north from Wells Rd. on Highway 32 for about 4 miles will bring you to Jackpine Rd. (W 14000 N). Turn right on Jackpine Rd. and follow for about 1 miles to Reece Rd. Turn right on Reece Rd. and go about 1,500 feet to W 14250 N and turn right. The parking lot for the ride to the Bitch Creek Trestle is on the right.

Access to the trail from the north starts in Ashton. Continue on Highway 20 from Idaho Falls to Ashton. Turn right on Highway 47 (Main St./E 1300 N). Continue for about 1 3/4 mile to where the Ashton to Tetonia Trail crosses the highway. The Marysville parking lot is on the left next to an old boxcar.

About 3/4 of a mile to the west of the Marysville parking lot is the intersection of Highway 32. Take Highway 32 south bound for about 9 miles to the Town of Drummond. Turn left on Main St. and proceed to the crossing of the Ashton to Tetonia Trail. Park in an area near

the old grain elevator.

Continuing southbound on Highway 32 for about 4 miles from Drummond, you will come to an old "France" grain elevator on the left side of the road. To the right of the elevator is a paved parking area. To the right on the parking area a gravel ramp goes up to the Ashton to Tetonia trail southbound. To use the trail for the northbound direction, you must ride along Highway 32 northbound back to N 4400 E (about 1,200 feet) to pick up the "detour" (described below).

Continuing southbound on Highway 32 from the old "France" grain elevator you will come to N 4700 E. Turn left and a small parking area (Lamont) can be found adjacent to the trail.

Continuing southbound from the Lamont parking area at N 4700 E for about 4 ½ miles will bring you to Jackpine Rd. (W 14000 N). Turn left on Jackpine Rd. and follow the directions given above for the Bitch Creek parking area.

Major Features:

The Rivers and Streams: The rivers and streams that the trail crosses are: Fall River, Conant Creek, Bitch Creek, Swanner Creek, Bull Elk Creek and Badger Creek.

The Fall River rises on the Madison and Pitchstone plateaus in the southwest corner of Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming and flows approximately 64 miles to its confluence with the Henrys Fork of the Snake River near Ashton, Idaho. Historically, the river was referred to as the Middle Fork of the Snake River or as Fall River or the Falls River by trappers and prospectors as early as the 1830s. It was officially named the Falls River by the 1872 Hayden Geological Survey, but was always called Fall River by the locals and so the U.S. Board on Geographic Names changed the official name to Fall River in 1997 at the request of Idaho authorities. The river is home to numerous waterfalls and cascades in its upper reaches.

Conant Creek is a tributary of the Fall River and is about 20 miles long. It has its origin just below Conant Peak in the Grand Teton Range. It is joined by Squirrel Creek just one mile north of the Town of Drummond. It joins the Fall River just to the east of where Highway 32 crosses over the Fall River. Conant Creek was named for Al Conant, a homesteader living west of the Tetons. Beaver Dick Leigh claimed that in 1865, Conant came close to drowning in the creek.

Bitch Creek is about 15 miles long and begins at the merger of two forks, North Bitch Creek, and South Bitch Creek, in western Wyoming. Before crossing into Idaho, it is joined by Crater Creek and Jackpine Creek. It serves as the border between Fremont County and Teton County. It empties into the Teton River. It was also once known as the North Fork Teton River. The name is said to be a corruption of the French word "biche" (which means doe), and that French trappers originally named the waterway "Anse de Biche."

Swanner Creek starts in the Grand Teton Range near the Idaho/Wyoming border. It is joined by Teepee Creek just east of the old Judkins Grain elevator. It is about five miles long and joins Bitch Creek just west of where Highway 32 crosses Bitch Creek.

Bull Elk Creek is about 15 miles long and starts in the Grand Teton Range in Wyoming. It follows alongside the Ashton to Tetonia Trail for about one mile before turning to the east to cross under Highway 32 and join Badge Creek.

The South Fork of Badger Creek has its origins on the slopes of Dry Ridge Mountain on the Grand Teton Range. It is about 17 miles long. It is joined by its north fork about 3 miles east of where it crosses under Highway 32. After being joined by Bull Elk Creek, it flows into the

Teton River.

The Landscape: The landscape scenery of the Teton Valley has a great deal in common with the Jackson Valley on the other side of the Grand Teton Range. However, while much of the Jackson Valley would become National Park and National Wildlife Refuge lands, the Teton Valley would remain as farms that date back to the settlement era. The pre-settlement environment of the Teton Valley has been described as a prairie of waving grass where frequent fires would kill out the shrubbery and sagebrush, and the grass would then grow very quickly and to a considerable height. It was a beautiful place and an ideal range for grazing animals. It could have been described as a small prairie. There was an abundance of game of all kinds, including elk, deer, antelope, and even American bison (buffalo). But today the scenery is dominated by agricultural fields containing such crops as: potatoes, seed potatoes, wheat, barley, and hay. Overshadowing these rich fields are the constant presence of the Grand Teton Range as it rises out of the valley to the east. The more-or-less flat and sometimes rolling terrain of the valley is occasionally punctuated by deep ravines that contain the rivers and streams that cross under the Ashton to Tetonia trail. In the mid-west prairie landscapes, these ravines are sometimes referred to as Coulees. The word coulee comes from the Canadian French *coulée*, from the French word couler meaning "to flow". These coulees provide an area that is sheltered from the flat and rolling terrain and it results in a rather rich flora of riparian species and evergreen forests, especially on the north facing slopes. Then the other dominant feature along the trail are the old grain elevators. You can actually look and see where the trail is headed off to the horizon by spotting the old elevators piercing the sky off in the distance.

The Trail: The park consists of a 29.6 mile long abandoned railroad right-of-way that has a gravel surface. The total park ownership is about 190 acres and it is managed by Harriman SP. There are five bridges and restored rail trestles that require periodic maintenance. Currently there is a 1.4 mile section that requires a detour because land owners are opposed to trail use across their properties.

The trail winds through small riparian areas and stands of aspen trees, and over three historic trestle bridges. Just west of the Teton Range, the Ashton-Tetonia Trail once again connects people and places, the past and future. Completed in 2010 under the Rails to Trails Conservancy program, the abandoned rail was transformed into a vibrant public space managed by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation. Today, visitors will enjoy the beautiful farm country of eastern Idaho, three bridge crossings, and unsurpassed views of the Teton Mountains. The historic train trestles at Fall River, Conant Creek, and Bitch Creek are popular landmarks along the trail. Visitors can experience the trail by hiking, biking, horseback riding, as well as nordic skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling in winter. The trail is packed gravel/dirt, so mountain bikes (or bikes with wheels that are at least 32mm wide) are recommended. So road bikes are not appropriate. The elevation of Ashton is 5,258' and the elevation in Tetonia is 6,047'. So riding the entire trail represents a 788' gain.

The converted rail bed trail has been years in the making, from when the state acquired the rail bed from the Union Pacific Railroad and used quit claim deeds to secure rights of way along the trail. The biggest hurdles were "reversions" where rights of way had reverted from the railroad to property owners. But the trail now is complete except for a section that runs through Kip Martindale's land in the Drummond area. In that case trail users are directed to county roads as a bypass.

At the Marysville parking lot, the IDPR has provided a vault toilet. You may wish to take advantage of this as there will not be another vault toilet until the Bitch Creek parking lot, about 21 miles down the trail. There are also two picnic tables here available for your use. Starting from the north at the Marysville parking lot, you will first cross over Highway 47. After crossing, the old Marysville/Ashton grain elevator can be seen on the left. This will be the first of several elevators that can be viewed along the trail.

For the next 3.6 miles, the scenery on both sides of the trail are agricultural crops. Then the trail arrives at the first trestle that crosses the Fall River. The deck of the trestle is about 500 feet long. This is the first glimpse the rider will get of the coulee or ravine that the trestles on the trail traverse. There is a great view of the river below and the slopes of the coulee covered with sagebrush and other natural vegetation types.

After traversing some agricultural field for about 1 mile, the old grain elevators situated on the left is at the site of the historic location of Grainville.

Another ½ mile south of Grainville brings you to the Conant Creek Trestle. The original wooden trestle built in 1911 is long gone. It was replaced around 1927 with steel girders and parts that came from a bridge that originally spanned the Snake River at American Falls. The total length of the trestle is approximately 780 feet and about 137 feet above the river below. This trestle is historically significant for its unique architecture. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 25, 1997. A grove of mixed evergreen trees can be viewed growing on the north facing slope of the coulee.

Along the next stretch of trail you will begin to see copses of aspen trees and other trees and scrubs along the trail right of way. There is even a place where an irrigation ditch parallels the trail and offers views of lush riparian growth. After about 1.4 miles along this stretch, you will come to the grain elevators and other structures that mark the town of Drummond. Here is an actual active elevator operation called Loosli elevators. The Rough Riders Saloon offers a menu of BBQ food just a few hundred feet off of the trail.

Departing Drummond, the trail traverses are few more copses of aspen trees. After about 3 miles from Drummond you will come to a point where the trail reaches an “East-West” farm type road known as county route 700 N. Here you must turn left on to this road, as the old rail bed ahead remains private property that was not been granted by the land owner for use as a trail. Proceed east on this road for about ¾ mile until it intersects with county road N 4400 E. Turn south on N 4400 E and proceed about ¾ mile until the road intersects Highway 32. This detour is the only place on the trail where you will not be riding “at grade” and there will be some “uphill” riding to the highway.

At Highway 32 you must turn east and ride along the edge of the highway to the Old “France” grain elevator. This now abandoned grain elevator was once operated by Pillsbury Mills. Just to the right of the elevator, you will find a paved parking lot. Continue to the right end of the parking lot and you will find a gravel ramp that will take you back up to the Ashton to Tetonia Trail.

The trail parallels Highway 32 here. You will be crossing through some more copses of aspen trees. About 3 miles past the old France grain elevator you will come to county road N 4700 E and the Lamont parking area. At this point you will pass the Lamont grain elevator and the trail will take a turn away from the highway. This segment of trail crosses through agricultural fields where the frequency of copses of aspen trees increases eventually to the point where they could be called groves of aspens.

About 4.3 miles past Lamont, the trail will cross through a thick grove of aspen trees and

you will now be on the approach to the Bitch Creek trestle. This trestle was built in 1923. It replaced the original wood structure that was constructed around 1912. It is 640 feet long and 135 feet high. The transverse decking and guardrails were added in 2009 by the IDPR. Stop in the middle and take in the scenery. Notice the winding stream below and the north sloe of the coulee that is heavily forested with evergreen trees. Stop at the south side to read the “Bitch Creek, Bridges and Beyond” interpretive panel.

Another 2 miles down the trail will bring you to the Bitch Creek access parking lot. Here the IDPR had provided a vault toilet for your convenience. There will not be another toilet along the way until the Town of Tetonia, 9 ½ miles down the trail.

Another ½ mile will bring you to the old grain elevator at Judkins. A little ways down the trail after Judkins will bring you to the Swanner Creek bridge. Here there are several ponds near the bridge with a significant wetlands area downstream. There is significant tree growth along the creek downstream. Watch for waterfowl.

The next 1 ½ miles cross through some agricultural fields. Then Bull Elk Creek comes alongside the east side of the trail. About 2 miles east of here is the Hollingshead Homestead site. This was a homestead site settled by Miles Miles and Karl Hollingshead around 1906. A few of the historic buildings are still standing. However, the site sits on private property. The site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 9, 2006.

Bull Elk Creek provides an adjacent riparian area with trees and ponds for about the next ¾ of a mile. Watch for waterfowl

Another ½ mile will bring you to the Wells Ave. parking lot and the old grain elevator at Felt. The grain elevator is just south of Wells Ave.

In another ½ mile, you will begin to see some groves of trees growing at and near the riparian areas that are adjacent to Badger Creek.

You are now just about 4 miles from the end of the trail at Tetonia. It will be about three miles when you cross Highway 33. The old grain elevators at Tetonia are now fully in view. Another mile brings you into the town and the end of the trail. Look for a little park (Carlson Park) adjacent to the east side of the elevators. There is a restroom building there.

Geology: The Teton Valley is located within the Wyoming Overthrust Belt System. The Teton Range raises up just to the east of the valley. That range and the volcanic activity that occurred to the north of Teton Valley were very influential in the geology of the area. The Teton Valley is a mountainous region brought about by uplifts, faults, fault blocks, alluvial deposits and erosion by streams to create steep narrow canyons.

The Teton Range contains some of the oldest rocks in North America. A 2.7 billion-year old metamorphic rock called gneiss makes up much of the Teton Range. These rocks were formed when sea floor sediments and volcanic debris were buried up to 18 miles deep as two tectonic plates collided. The intense heat and pressure at these great depths changed or metamorphosed the sediments into today's rocks, separating different minerals into lighter and darker layers.

Molten magma began squeezing into cracks in the gneiss 2.5 billion years ago, and it cooled and crystallized to form igneous granite. This speckled rock with its interlocking crystals is harder than gneiss, and it forms some of the highest peaks. Roughly 775 million years ago, the region stretched north to south, cracking the deeply buried gneiss and granite and forming a series of vertical, east-west trending cracks. Basaltic magma squirted into these cracks and cooled to form dikes of an igneous rock called diabase.

Above the igneous and metamorphic core are layers of sedimentary rocks that wrap around the Teton Range and are eroding from the eastern side. These seafloor rocks preserve a variety of fossils, including trilobites, stromatolites, corals, and shells of other organisms.

Although it is made from some of the oldest rocks, the Tetons are one of the youngest mountain ranges in North America. They have been uplifting for less than 10 million years. The mountains uplift one earthquake at a time along the 40-mile long Teton fault, a north-south trending crack in the earth's crust.

Pleistocene Ice Age glaciers sculpted the Teton landscape over multiple glacial advances, which widened V-shaped river canyons into U-shaped glacial canyons, bulldozed depressions filled by lakes today, sharpened high peaks, and filled the valley floor with outwash debris.

The Teton Valley is also marked by three cycles of volcanic activity that occurred in the last 2.1 million years. Pleistocene Basalt lava flows occurred over the northern reaches of the Teton Valley. Some of these flows occurred as far south as Tetonia.

Massive amounts of alluvial deposits flowed down into the valley from erosion associated with the canyons of the Fall River, Teton River, Warm River, and Bitch Creek forming alluvial plains. Erosion along these rivers and streams then cut deep canyons into the plains. So today a variety of igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks can be found in the Teton Valley. Further, this provided the valley with a wide variety of soils. The surface being primarily composed of coarse loams and soils weathered from igneous and sedimentary sources.

Ecosystems and Plant Communities: The elevation of Ashton is 5,258' and the elevation in Tetonia is 6,047'. So the average elevation of the park is about 5,600.' The pre-settlement environment of the Teton Valley was described as a prairie of waving grass where frequent fires would kill out the shrubbery and sagebrush, and the grass would then grow very quickly and to a considerable height. It was a beautiful place and an ideal range for stock. The snow seemed to drift more than it did in later years and would stay in drifts until late in the summer. There was an abundance of game of all kinds. Elk, deer, antelope, and even American bison (buffalo) were often seen in herds.

However, the landscape today is for the most part, agricultural lands with some occasional lodgepole pine forest, aspen and riparian areas. The places where "natural" landscapes occur are in areas where the terrain is not suitable for agriculture such as in the coulees, riparian areas, or where land owners have chosen to leave "woodlots" of aspen groves. In addition to the agricultural lands, there are four ecosystems/plant communities that can be viewed along the way, that include the lodgepole pine forest, aspen forest, riparian/wetlands, and river.

Lodgepole Pine - Douglas Fir Forest: The lodgepole pine - Douglas fir forest here are perhaps remnants of a much greater expanse of forests. It is dominated by very thick stands of mature lodgepole pine growing in the more sheltered and favorable conditions of the north slopes of the coulees or ravines. Further, they thrive here because the steep slopes are unsuitable for agriculture and were never put to the plow. There are Douglas fir and aspen scattered throughout this forest. The lodgepole pine - Douglas fir forest has a nice undergrowth of Rocky Mountain maple, wild strawberry, mountain ash, cow parsnip, fireweed, wild rose, and saskatoon, The forest floor is covered with forbs such as mules ear, wyethia, penstemon, purple aster, golden aster, glacier lily, hooked spur violet, heartleaf arnica, Indian paintbrush, salisfy, goatsbeard, snow berry, starry false Solomon's seal, camas, lupine, and a variety of grasses.

Aspen Forest: Aspen forests grow in a wide range of environmental conditions, from moist streamsides, to dry ridges, on talus slopes, in shallow to deep soils of various origins, and are tolerant of wide variations in climate. As a result, aspen communities are found associated with a diverse range of vegetation, from semi-arid shrublands to wet, spruce-fir forest. Hence their ability to thrive in and around the agricultural fields of the Teton Valley. Here rather than the aspen being a seral tree, it is the climax species. The lack of coniferous tree seed sources due to surrounding agricultural fields, prevent coniferous trees from replacing these groves. Further, fire is a natural feature in much of the aspen ecosystem of western North America. It is responsible for the abundance of aspen in the West and for the even-aged structure of most stands. But here in the Teton Valley, agricultural manipulation of the environment may contribute to the maintenance of the aspen groves and smaller copses.

The keynote species is quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*). The aspen is native to cold regions with cool summers, in the north of the Northern Hemisphere, extending south at high-altitude areas such as mountains or high plains. They are all medium-sized deciduous trees reaching 49 to 98 ft. tall. In North America, it is referred to as Quaking Aspen or Trembling Aspen because the leaves "quake" or tremble in the wind. This is due to their flattened petioles which reduces aerodynamic drag on the trunk and branches.

Aspens typically grow in environments that are otherwise dominated by coniferous tree species, and which are often lacking other large deciduous tree species. Aspens have evolved several adaptations that aid their survival in such environments. One is the flattened leaf petiole, which reduces aerodynamic drag during high winds and decreases the likelihood of trunk or branch damage. Dropping leaves in the winter (like most but not all other deciduous plants) also helps to prevent damage from heavy winter snow. Additionally, the bark is photosynthetic, meaning that growth is still possible after the leaves have been dropped. The bark also contains lenticels that serve as pores for gas exchange (similar to the stomata on leaves).

Aspens are also aided by the rhizomatic nature of their root systems. Most aspens grow in large clonal colonies, derived from a single seedling, and spread by means of root suckers; new stems in the colony may appear at up to 98–131 ft. from the parent tree. Each individual tree can live for 40–150 years above ground, but the root system of the colony is long-lived. In some cases, this is for thousands of years, sending up new trunks as the older trunks die off above ground. For this reason, it is considered to be an indicator of ancient woodlands. They are able to survive forest fires, because the roots are below the heat of the fire, and new sprouts appear after the fire burns out. The high stem turnover rate combined with the clonal growth leads to proliferation in aspen colonies. Aspens do not thrive in the shade, and it is difficult for seedlings to grow in an already mature aspen stand.

Riparian/Wetlands: Riparian: This ecosystem occurs along the Ashton to Tetonia trail in places where the trail crosses rivers and streams. Some of the streams sort of spread out and created small adjacent ponds with slow moving water. Typical species of this ecosystem include cottonwood, alder, willow, bull rush, cattail, sedges, larkspur, mules ear, sagebrush, rabbit brush, and choke cherry.

River: The river and stream ecosystem in the Teton Valley represents a significant fishery. Fish species observed in surveys since 1990 in Teton River Watershed include: brook trout, cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, rainbow trout, rainbow/cutthroat hybrids, and Yellowstone cutthroat trout. Mammals such as beaver and otters are also known to be present.

Wildlife:

Mammals: The mammals present in the park include: elk, deer, moose, bear, pronghorn antelope, marmot, coyote, fox, mountain lion, beaver, otter, and Columbia ground squirrel. The keynote species is the Columbian ground squirrel. The Columbian ground squirrel (*Uroditellus columbianus*), is a species of rodent common in certain regions of Canada and the northwestern United States. It is the second largest member of the genus *Uroditellus*, which is part of the tribe Marmotini, along with marmots, chipmunks, prairie dogs, and other holarctic ground squirrels.

They are stout, with short dense fur, which is characteristically tawny across the bridge of the nose. The Columbian ground squirrel is 12 to 16 inches in length overall, with a tail measuring 3 to 5 inches. Its hair is dense and relatively short. The fur along the back, legs, and feet is a more cinnamon buff, with darker fur closer to the body. There is a pale beige to buff ring of fur around the eye. The neck fur is gray along the sides of the cheeks. The flanks may be light beige or gray. They have a darker tail, with darker underfur and some lighter beige markings above and dark to grayish white below.

The Columbian ground squirrel is found in western areas of North America. It occurs in the Rocky Mountains, from as far north as western Alberta and southeastern British Columbia. They are found in the western parts of Montana, through central Idaho and into northern and eastern reaches of Washington. They are also found along plains of eastern Washington. They reside between 700–8,000 feet in elevation. Columbian ground squirrels live in colonies distributed discontinuously throughout their range. They are found in alpine and subalpine areas, along the edges of meadows or on mounds where meadow flooding occurs. They will also occupy disturbed habitats like the edges of agricultural fields.

Columbian ground squirrels hibernate around 250 days a year. The amount of time they are active varies depending on local climate as well as variations in behavior of animals of different sexes and ages. The first group to emerge are the adult males, followed by adult females, yearlings, then juveniles.

Columbian ground squirrels are notorious for their tunnel and burrow systems. They often use two types of burrow entrances, with one being small and roughly the same diameter as the tunnel itself, while another larger and more funnel shaped. They spend a great deal of time digging and maintaining their burrows. They emerge from their burrows about an hour before sunrise and return near sunset. When above ground, the most common activities for Columbian ground squirrels include standing at attention, feeding, and grooming. More time is spent standing at attention than engaging in other activities. They are active during the hottest parts of the day, but more likely to be found out around mid-morning. If disturbed while out of the burrow, the squirrels will stand at attention, watching while they are approached to within a few yards, then race for the burrow entrance, making squeaks and whistles. For this reason, they have sometimes been called “whistle pigs.”

Birds: The birds present in the park include: raven, common flicker, meadow lark, red-winged blackbird, yellow-headed blackbird, western tanager, osprey, American kestrel, red-tailed hawk, Canada geese, mallard, pelican, turkey vulture, night hawk, pheasant, great blue heron, cedar waxwing, violet-green swallow, and peregrine falcon.

Fish: The fish present in the park include: brook trout, cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, rainbow trout, rainbow/cutthroat hybrids, and Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

Cultural History: The lands of the Teton Valley were first occupied 11,000 years ago. Bands of Indians hunted herds of game that abounded at the end of the last ice age. As changes in the environment led to the extinction of many of the species that they hunted, more reliance was placed on the gathering of plants. Small groups of families left winter villages along the upper Snake River and followed the developing vegetation into the mountains during the spring and summer. In the fall the Indians began to hunt mountain sheep and other game, following the animals down to winter range near their camps. Small and large game, fish, berries, lodgepole pine and other resources were harvested seasonally.

Although the first permanent settlers did not arrive in Teton Valley until the 1880s, there is evidence of seasonal occupation of the valley by Native Americans dating back approximately 900 years. Native Americans utilized resources in the Valley, including elk, deer, antelope, moose, bison, berries, and camas, from spring until fall. Prime materials for tool making were also accessible with obsidian sources located in the Teton Range near the southeastern portion of the Valley and in the Big Hole Range to the east. The Teton Valley was generally part of the range of the Shoshone, Flatheads, Nez Perce, and sometimes the Crows.

In 1857, Chief Washakie told the story that on one of his tribe's annual winter food gathering trips they had a great fight with the Sioux in this valley many years prior, when he was a small boy, and that his people lost about 2,000 of their best men. They also had a severe battle with the Crows in 1857. The Crows were their eternal enemies, stealing their horses on every possible occasion. The Shoshones were the victors in this battle and chased the Crows as far as the head waters of the Missouri. One hundred and three of the Crows were killed and about as many more wounded in this skirmish.

After the battle between the Crows and Shoshones the latter moved their camp to the junction of the Teton and North Fork of Snake Rivers. But the mosquitos drove them out, and they then moved their camp into the Teton Valley.

The rich prairie of the Teton Valley produced plenty of antelope, elk, deer, moose, bear, and vast herds of American bison (buffalo). The summers were spent gathering game meat and processing it by butchering and drying. Hides were skinned and processed. When the time came to migrate to their winter camps every horse was packed to the limit with hides, dried meat, fish and berries.

The Shoshone Indians formerly inhabited western Wyoming and southern Idaho, and parts of Utah and Nevada. The name signifies people of the high lands, inhabiting the elevated country of the Rocky Mountains. They were also called "Snake Indians." In October, 1863, a treaty was concluded with the western bands of Shoshones. In this treaty the government acquired title to large tracts of land extending over parts of Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Oregon. Associated with them more or less were the Bannock Indians. On June 14, 1867, Fort Hall was set apart for the Shoshone, Bannock and associate tribes. Then by the treaty of Fort Bridger, in the spring of 1868, they agreed to relinquish all lands in Wyoming and southern Idaho, except certain parts reserved for their occupancy. Part of this cession embraced what is now Teton County.

The Fort Hall Reservation had been established by an Executive Order in 1867 and the Shoshone and Bannock Tribes were forcibly moved there. Later the Northern Shoshone bands were also forcibly moved to Fort Hall.

History:

John Colter, of Lewis and Clark Expedition fame, would become the first person of European descent to see the Teton Valley. In 1808, Colter rode away for a hunt carrying with him a little pack, powder and balls, some salt to season his meat and a few trinkets for presents all rolled up in the buffalo robe which served as his bed. He made friends with the Crows at a village in the Wind River range. The Crows told him that they were going to join their main village across the mountains in the west. They struck out the next morning to travel to what they called the "Broad Valley." They entered the Teton Valley where Colter encountered the great Crow village. Here Colter gave a feast and smoked the pipe of peace with them.

The next to enter this valley was Major Andrew Henry and his company, in the fall of 1810. Henry had been influenced by the exploits of Manuel Liza who had returned to the frontier with many bales of beaver skins. Henry and Liza organized the Missouri Fur Company and they invaded Blackfoot country in search of trapping opportunities. But the Blackfeet would have none of it. So, he and his group of trappers journeyed south from Montana over Raynolds Pass to the lake that bears Henry's name. The group followed the lake's outlet, the Henrys Fork, about 50 miles, through an area now occupied by the Island Park Reservoir. Near the future town of St. Anthony, Henry and his small party of trappers built winter quarters that became known as Fort Henry.

In 1811 John Jacob Astor, commissioned an expedition to the area for the purpose of establishing some fur trading. The expedition started up the Missouri in the spring of 1811, following the Lewis and Clark route. This expedition had as its head William Price' Hunt, a young man then 30 years of age. After passing through the Teton Valley they stopped for a while at the deserted Fort Henry on October 8, 1811, and remained at there for ten days. Hunt named the Teton Peaks the Pilot Knobs. The Shoshones called them Tee-win-at, meaning the pinnacles.

Donald Mackenzie, a Scotchman, was in the northwest country for some time prior to 1800, and in 1820 was in charge of the trappers from the Teton Valley to the Bear River. He left in 1820, and Alexander Ross succeeded him. He was about to quit the Columbia when he received an order dated July 13, 1823, to occupy the Snake River country. Peter Skeen Ogden, from whom Ogden, Utah, derived its name, was a companion of Ross and urged him to accept the appointment.

The Teton Valley was then known as Pierre's Hole, named in honor of "le grand Pierre" Tivanitagon, a Hudson's Bay Company trader said to be of Iroquois descent, who was killed in a battle with Blackfoot Indians in 1827.

Famous western explorer Jedediah Strong Smith was one of the seven Americans associated with the Ross Camp. Many other American trappers and mountain men would find their way to Pierre's Hole. The Teton River flows northward through the mountain meadows of Pierre's Hole and then conjoins Bitch Creek (once known as the North Fork of the Teton) just before it turns west and into Teton Canyon. To mountain men, a large low-lying valley, such as this, with abundant beaver and game was called a "hole". Mountain men preferred these areas of numerous beaver rich streams as they provided ample food and comfortable camping in addition to beaver pelts.

Pierre's Hole was the site of the Rocky Mountain Fur Rendezvous of 1829 and 1832. Hundreds of mountain men, trappers, Indians and fur company traders met to sell furs or trade for supplies. At the end of the 1832 rendezvous, an intense battle ensued between a group of Gros Ventre Indians and the party of American trappers aided by their Nez Perce and Flathead allies. In the summer of 1832, a battle was fought between the trappers, Flatheads and Nez Perce with the Blackfeet Indian Tribe near Victor, Idaho.

In 1834, Pierre-Jean De Smet held the first religious service in the West in Teton Valley.

After the fur trade subsided in the 1840s, the Teton Valley returned to a quiet summer hunting valley for Native Americans. An Englishman named Richard 'Beaver Dick' Leigh came to the Teton region sometime around 1860, and frequently trapped and hunted in Teton Basin and wintered on the lower Teton River near its confluence with the Henry's Fork of the Snake a few miles below the basin. Beaver Dick guided F. V. Hayden and his geological survey through the Teton and Yellowstone region in 1872. He guided the Stevenson party in exploration of Teton Basin and the first ascent of the Grand Teton and guided the entire Hayden Expedition in Yellowstone and in Jackson Hole.

The Teton Basin was later settled by Mormon farmers, who used the fertile but elevated valley to graze cattle and raise hay and other feed. It would be these early pioneers of the Snake River Valley who would begin calling it the 'Teton Basin,' taking the word Teton from the peaks which the French-Canadian trappers called the Trois Tetons, or three teats.

From 1841 to 1868, over 300,000 whites migrated over the South Pass, about 150 miles south of Teton Valley. The migrations were due to the California Gold Rush of 1849 and the migration of the Mormons to avoid religious persecution. The migrating groups took over lands that belonged to the Bannock, Nez Perce and Blackfeet. The Nez Perce tribe retreated towards Canada only to be captured short of the border.

The completion of the transcontinental railroad and the Homestead Act of 1862 brought many settlers into Teton Valley. However, significant settlement did not begin here until 1888. Mormon settlers from Salt Lake City, Utah, clustered in many small communities throughout the Valley, as severe winters demanded that stores and post offices be located within easy reach by horse team and sled. Most notably, the towns of Driggs and Victor were established in the central and southern portions of the Valley. Many of the settlers took to farming barley and winter wheat. Many farms would incorporate irrigation by constructing ditches and canals and the first water rights were recorded in 1886. However, the northern portion of the Valley, surrounding the town of Felt, was primarily dry farmed.

The early settlers established several small communities such as: Drummond, Farnum, Felt, Franz, Grainville, Greentimber, Harris, Highland, Horseshoe Flats, Hugginsville (Svea Falls), Lamont, Lillian, Lodi, Marysville, New Hope, Ora, Rice, Sarilda, Sand Creek, Upper Sand Creek, Tetonia and Vernon.

The town of Marysville had its beginning in May 1889 when Horace Weaver, his half-brother Frank, and his cousin Gibson came through the upper Snake River Valley. Later that summer another cousin, Mary Weaver Baker, and her husband, Joseph Baker, came and filed on a quarter section of land with a spring on it, now known as Baker Spring, about a mile north of present-day Ashton. They were the first settlers in the area. They homesteaded there and used a wagon box for their bedroom and a lean-to as their kitchen until they could build their two-room log cabin. Joe's brothers hauled the logs from the Green timber area. Thomas William Whittle settled nearby.

The first post office building in the area was built at Lodi by John L. Dorcheus at Dorcheus Springs, about a mile and a quarter north and a quarter-mile west of present-day Ashton, with Mary Dorcheus, who came in 1893, as postmistress. Ed Dorcheus, Mary's father, bought the homestead of Mr. Shepard, and the post office and a four-room school building were built there at Lodi. Mr. Shepard taught at Lodi in the winter and Sarilda in the summer. Mail was delivered from Market Lake to St. Anthony in 1906 and on to Lodi.

Ashton was first and foremost a farming community, as the soil of the area is rich and the

water is plentiful. Shortly after the first settlers arrived in the 1890s, several canals were developed to divert water from streams running off the Yellowstone Plateau and Teton Range. Some farmland, mostly to the east, is high enough and close enough to the Teton Range that crops can grow without irrigation due to increased rainfall. The relatively high altitude limited crops to those requiring a short growing season such as grain and alfalfa. Seed potatoes were not tried as a crop until 1920 but as it turns out, the area is perfect for seed potatoes. A premium price could be demanded for these potatoes grown in the clean soils around Ashton and the area quickly became the largest seed potato producing area in the world.

In 1900, the Union Pacific Railroad, under the careful watch of the OSL (Oregon Short Line) and St. Anthony Railroad Company, brought the railroad into the Upper Snake River Valley from Idaho Falls to St. Anthony, Idaho. Following successful construction and operation of the St. Anthony Railroad, some reports indicate that Edward Harriman, chief operating officer of the Union Pacific railroad, saw an opportunity of passenger service to Yellowstone National Park via the west entrance. Plans were made for another railroad from St. Anthony to West Yellowstone. The planned route for the new railroad was through Marysville, up Warm River Canyon into the forested Island Park country. Despite the obvious economic advantages and support, the residents of Marysville resisted the new railroad intruding upon their land and into their lives. The matter was expeditiously resolved when Union Pacific decided to build the railroad through a new town one mile west of Marysville named after the OSL Chief Engineer, William Ashton. Ashton quickly sprang to life while Marysville slowly declined into near oblivion. One of the two founding fathers, H. G. "Fess" Fuller, became the long-time Mayor of Ashton and the other, Charles C. Moore, went on to become Governor of Idaho.

The Oregon Short Line began regular daily service to Ashton on March 29, 1906. In July 1906 the original tar-paper depot was torn down and a new depot built 1.7 miles to the north at the site of Ashton. The new 24 by 40 foot railroad depot was completed in 1907 and extended in 1921. In 1907 they built a section house, a bunkhouse, and three tool houses. In 1914 the railroad added a 14 by 24 foot freight house, a wooden water tank 24 feet in diameter by 16 feet high, a coaling station 24 feet in diameter and 19 feet high, a four- stall brick engine house 86 feet long, a 16 by 34 foot round house, a 13 by 42-foot sand house, and a 24 by 40 foot power house.

In 1904, 640 acres of land had been purchased for about \$40 per acre for the townsite of Ashton from George Harrigfeld, J. E. McGavin, and Asa Hendricks by the Ashton Townsite Co., which consisted of 13 men. Most of the men were residents of nearby St. Anthony and included C. C. Moore and H. G. Fuller. They were instrumental in creating the township, which was began February 14, 1906, when the first train stopped at the Ashton depot. Fremont County records give the actual date of incorporation as July 11, 1906.

The first business building in Ashton was the office of Moore and Fuller on the south side of the 500 block of Main Street in business on February 22, 1906. Charles C. Moore and Hiram G. "Fess" Fuller, two of Ashton's founders, built a small frame building known as "The Old Townsite Building" and were operating a real estate business and an insurance business there in February 1906.

The first scheduled passenger service from Ashton to West Yellowstone ran on June 1908.

Beginning in 1910, Ashton was the railhead used for the construction of Jackson Lake Dam in Grand Teton National Park by the Bureau of Reclamation. For several years, materials and equipment were freighted by wagon from the Reclamation Building in Ashton to the dam site at Moran, Wyoming on what was known as the Ashton-Moran Road or Reclamation Road,

as the locals called it, that ran 56 miles over the north end of the Teton Range.

Union Pacific began building a railroad along this route in 1910. The track-laying gangs, totaling as many as 1800 men, were mostly Chinese and Japanese (six railroad cars under Pat Feeney) and Greeks (ten railroad cars under Chris Carson). They were paid two dollars for a twelve-hour day. Construction of this Teton Valley branch of the Union Pacific Railroad was completed in 1913 linking several rural towns in the Teton Valley. The Branch ran to Driggs and Victor from Ashton. They built an engine house and other railroad facilities in Ashton to service the Teton Valley Branch and the Yellowstone Branch. The railroad began to be used to transport livestock, peas, grain and limestone. These and further developments in the area soon made Ashton prosper and become one of the more important towns in Eastern Idaho.

Miles and Karl Hollingshead began homesteading some property just northeast of Felt around 1906. In their early years in the area, they worked on the construction of the Jackson Lake Dam in 1906-1907. In 1910, Miles Hollingshead filed a claim for 160 acres of land northeast of Felt. He received patent to this claim in 1913. The brothers worked the land and improved their homestead with the construction of several outbuildings and other structures. The site was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 9, 2006.

Arthur Conant homesteaded in 1908. While he was hauling firewood, his load tipped over and pinned him underneath, He was unable to free himself and froze to death in the creek that now bears his name. The original trestle built over Conant Creek was erected in 1911. The three Pegram spans used in the Conant Creek bridge were originally erected over the Snake River at American Falls in 1894. Each Pegram span is 164 feet long and 14 feet wide with a maximum depth of 30 feet, and each is composed of seven panels. Connecting the Pegram spans at either end are two steel deck girders of 60 feet and 30 feet, thence timber approach spans approximately 60 feet long at the north end and 45 feet long at the south. The total length of the bridge is approximately 780 feet. The two center towers are each approximately 107 feet tall, and from their base to the roadbed is 137 feet. In 1916 the Pegram trusses were each reinforced with another similar truss along the center line. In 1927 the existing steel girders were installed to replace the original timbers. The Conant Creek Pegram Truss Railroad Bridge was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 25, 1997.

By 1910, the small community of Felt had grain farms, sawmills, small stores, a post office, a school, and grain elevators. By 1911, the railroad had arrived as far as Felt. The actual township of Felt was dedicated by the Felt Investment Company in September of 1911.

The railroad was extended through to Victor in 1913, which became its southern terminus. The Victor depot was constructed in 1914. The Teton Valley branch line all the way to Victor was approximately 44 miles long and climbed from 5258' at Ashton to 6,205' at Victor, a grade of .41 percent. It crossed three major water courses at Warm River, Conant Creek, and Bitch Creek.

The railroad served strategically located grain storage elevators located at intervals sufficient to accommodate grain quantities with a radius of one-day wagon's round-trip. The remains of the old wooden grain elevators at Felt, Judkins, Lamont, France, Drummond, Grainville, and Marysville can still be seen today.

Elmo Lamont homesteaded the land that became the village of Drummond. The town was to have been named Lamont for the Lamont family who first settled there, but Drummond, the railroad engineer who surveyed the line there, decided to name it after himself and call the next town Lamont. Margaret Painter was the first citizen of Drummond. The 1900 census showed 15 residents. The first Drummond post office was established in October 1911,

with Mary Conlin as postmaster. The first mail carrier was Phoebe Saunders White Swanner. She made a loop three times a week from Ashton to Drummond and on to deliver mail to Squirrel, where Charlie Burrell owned the store and post office, and on to Fall River, where Silas Green owned the Farnum Store and post office. The Foster Lumber Co. was located there in 1913, with James "Monte" Painter working there. He was also the first janitor of the school and was mayor for several years until 1947.

The settlement was incorporated as the Village of Drummond in January 1917, with L. A. Lamont, C. N. Dedman, H. L. Benson, F. K. Wallin, V. E. Bailey, and R. J. Little as trustees. This led to the ultimate demise of the other small communities in the area. The date on the three-story schoolhouse was 1913. The grain elevator at Drummond was owned by the Sperry Division of General Mills.

The current version of the Bitch Creek Trestle was built in 1923. The decking of the trail is 135 feet above the creek.

Most of the railroad facilities in the small communities of Drummond, Lamont, and Felt were removed in 1950 as diesel locomotives replaced steam locomotives, and the passenger trains were removed from the schedule. For some years the combined passenger and freight train between Ashton and Victor was called the "Gallop-in' Goose."

Passenger service from Ashton to West Yellowstone was discontinued in 1960. The Teton Valley branch discontinued passenger service altogether in 1965 and discontinued freight service in 1981. The line from Tetonia to Victor was abandoned in 1981, and from Tetonia to Ashton in 1990.

Park History: The State Legislature appropriated funds in 1995 for the right-of-way to be taken over by the IDPR for a "Rails to Trails" hiking and bicycling path. The Conant Creek Pegram Truss Railroad Bridge was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 25, 1997. IDPR made application for some Federal Highway Administration grants, to purchase the abandoned right-of-way and make required improvements to the bridges in 2000. The total funding was to be about \$2 million. It would take almost 7 years for the grants to be made. There were also some individual land owners whom IDPR negotiated easement deals with for use of their property, which also added to the project's time span. IDPR added an additional half million dollars to complete the Bitch Creek portion of the project. The original engineer for the project was consulted and after necessary changes were made, the Bitch Creek bridge was widened from 10 feet to 12 feet and transverse decking and guard rails were added in the summer of 2009. The State Legislature approved the Ashton to Tetonia Trailway State Park in 2003. The trail was opened to the public in 2010.

Recreation Activities:

Scenic Viewing: The route of the trail offers

Please Remember

- Motorized vehicles are prohibited on the trail with the exception of snowmobiles that may be used when there is sufficient snow on the trail.
- Dogs must be on a leash at all times and are not permitted in the buildings.
- Camping is not allowed on the trail.
- There are no trash receptacles available, so please pack it in, pack it out.
- Please stay on the trail and within its identified right-of-way. Please respect private property.

scenic views of the west side of the Teton Mountains. The trail crosses over three significant rivers and streams that flow through deep coulees or ravines. There are also several places where there are adjacent wetland and riparian areas. There are several old historic grain elevators along the right-of-way.

Picnicking: There are 2 picnic tables available for individual day use at the Marysville parking lot.

Trails: The 29.6 trail is open to hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The surface is gravel and not well suited for narrow tire bicycles.

Winter Sports: Nordic skiing and snowmobile use are available in the winter months

Resource Management Issues: Other than within the trail right-of-way, there are limited opportunities for providing necessary developments and improvements for enhancement of trail use such as visitor center/administrative centers, campgrounds, picnic areas, parking lots, etc. There is one significant detour in the trail where the IDPR had been unable to acquire an easement or right-of-way. After 7 years since its opening, the trail is still a gravel surface limiting its use to “fat tired” bicycles. In several locations, motor vehicles have been driving on the trail due to lack of appropriate barriers.

Suggestions for the Future:

A master plan has yet to be developed. There has been mention of the possibility of paving the trail from Ashton to Fall River. Some other interest groups dream of a full loop trail that connects to Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park and back to Victor, Driggs, and Teton. Those recommendations that represent very favorable enhancements for the Ashton to Teton Trailway State Park are as follows:

- IDPR should continue to conduct negotiations with the land owner of the detour section of the trail. If an acceptable price can be derived, IDPR should seek grants or appropriation of funds to purchase an easement to eliminate the detour.
- IDPR should install appropriate motor vehicle barriers in each place that a road crosses the trail.
- IDPR should make plans and seek funds for paving the trail.
- IDPR should make attempts to provide connection of the trail to the Driggs/Victor Trail to the south and the old Yellowstone Rail Trail on the north.
- IDPR should consider looking for an appropriate site for an administrative center/visitor center. Since the significant interpretive themes of this park are railroad and agricultural history, a site that includes an historic depot or grain elevator would be desired. In particular, the old France grain elevator could be a great start for this.
- A “staging area” where overnight lodging can be provided would serve to increase regional visitation to the site. IDPR should consider acquiring some land that includes an aspen grove or is adjacent to a stream or river where a campground/picnic area could be developed.